

THE
WESLEYAN CRISIS:

OR,

THE CO-EXISTENCE OF WESLEYAN METHODISM,

AND THE

“CENTRAL ASSOCIATION,”

TOTALLY INCOMPATIBLE.

BY CHARLES WELCH.

“Incedimus per ignes suppositos cineri doloso.”

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INTRODUCTION.

TO THE REV. JABEZ BUNTING, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF THE WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION.

REV. AND RESPECTED SIR,

I HOPE the following brief statement will appear to you, and to every candid reader, an ample vindication of my appearing a fourth time, the public apologist of Wesleyan Methodism. On Friday, February 6, the attention of the inhabitants of Hull, was drawn to the following public announcement:—

“WESLEYAN-METHODIST ASSOCIATION.

“A Meeting will be held in the Tabernacle, Sykes Street, on Wednesday Evening, February 11, 1835. Doors to be open at Six, and the Chair to be taken at half-past Six. The Rev. Dr. Warren, of Manchester, Mr. D. Rowland, Mr. H. Powley, jun., of Liverpool, and other Gentlemen, are expected to address the Meeting, and give information relative to the principles and progress of the Association.”

As soon as the intended Meeting became generally known, numerous and highly respectable applications were made to me to confront the parties publicly, and to rescue our cause from the degradation and infamy into which certain persons were aiming to plunge it. To the request of my friends I could not yield; I knew the temper and spirit of the agitators, and their measures, too well, to indulge any hope of being permitted to do myself or my cause ample justice. As the hour of meeting approached, my friends became importunate; early on the previous Monday I waited upon the Rev.

Wm. Clegg, and expressed a disposition to meet my opponents in public debate; subject, however, to such preliminary restrictions as would elicit truth, confound the slanderer, and convince every impartial spectator, that we had common sense and common honesty. I presented to Mr. Clegg a copy of the underwritten letter, which I wished to be conveyed to Dr. Warren.

"TO THE REV. S. WARREN, LL. D."

"REV. SIR,

"HAVING learned by the public press, that you are expected to act a conspicuous part in a public Meeting to be convened in this town on Wednesday evening, I beg leave to offer a remark on the subject at issue between you and the Wesleyan Connexion. As the question is strictly legislative and disciplinary, to the correct solution of which intimate knowledge of the Methodist Connexion is requisite, you cannot but be conscious that the major part of the audience must consist of persons who have not made this subject their special study; and that, under such circumstances, appeals to large masses of people must be, at best, a mere *ad captandum* process. I am not so ignorant of the history of man in general, or of the church of Christ in particular, as foolishly to throw myself into the tumultuous surf of a public *argumentum ad vulgum et passiones*; neither is it requisite for me to tell you how the worst passions of our fallen nature will be in all probability apparent; I need only adduce the scenes at Leeds last December in illustration, and in proof of their utter inadequacy to realise the hopes of honest disputants on either side. I respectfully invite you to public disputation, on the following terms; subject, however, to such modifications as may be previously and mutually approved.

"1. The Chairman shall be chosen by lot. 2. The

audience shall consist solely of the officers of our Connexion: Trustees, Leaders, Local Preachers, and Stewards, to any indefinite number, and from any Circuit. 3. No interruption to the speaker shall be permitted, either by applause or disapprobation. 4. Each speaker shall alternately occupy a specific time, say twenty minutes, and no longer without his opponent's permission. 5. The abstract general question of the validity of the Methodist Constitution shall be discussed and disposed of BEFORE any allusion to recent events shall be permitted. 6. Each party shall employ a reporter. 7. No vote shall be taken by the Meeting as to determining who is the victor in the debate. 8. The two reports shall be collated, and *one* publication shall be allowed, to which each party shall affix his name, in attestation of the correctness of the report. My reasons for this communication are, 1. I have waited until nearly the last hour, in hope that some gentleman would undertake this necessary, and to me painful and unwelcome task.

2. *'Pudet hæc opprobria nobis
Et dici potuisse, et non potuisse refelli.'*

"I am, Rev. Sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"CHARLES WELCH."

All my friends concurred in approving my mode of conducting the debate; as it chalked out a middle path between a total silence, which many would interpret as an admission of guilt, and the uproarious and abominable vociferations of a stormy debate, disreputable to our common Christianity.

As I would not throw down the gauntlet on my own responsibility, but act in concert with the local accredited authorities; and as Mr. Clegg was not prepared,

on the impulse of the moment, to examine this novel challenge in all its ultimate bearings ; he hesitated to sanction a measure capable perhaps of being misinterpreted by those who are watching over us for evil. Of course, my challenge fell to the ground. My friends now became as urgent for me to *write*, as they had been for me to *speak* : I have yielded to their importunity, and I hope the conscientious learner of Wesleyan law and discipline will find in the following pages most, if not all, his doubts and objections removed.

I have made free use of my "Wesleyan Polity," wherever I found matter illustrative of my argument. Many pamphlets have recently appeared on the existing controversies ; most of them, however, have so intermingled the law with the circumstantial detail of recent events, as to render it desirable that some cheap pamphlet should be written, that shall work out the principles in due symmetry and force, apart from the disgusting details of Wesleyan tergiversation. I hope this small work may supply this desideratum, and prove an acceptable manual to the young inquirer.

Wishing, that in health, wealth, and happiness, you long may live,

I remain, Rev. and respected Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

CHARLES WELCH.

HULL, March, 1835.

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THE WESLEYAN CRISIS,

&c.

I. *General Remarks.*—The present day has been denominated by many an infidel day. The truth of this designation greatly depends upon the meaning we attach to infidelity. If by infidelity is meant the rejection of the divine authenticity of the sacred Scriptures, then the present period is perhaps not so sceptical as were the reigns of George I. and II., and as was the early part of the reign of George III. Though the present day may be acquitted of the gross charge, yet there is a spirit awfully pervading the public mind, of equally blasting and withering influence; which, like a moral miasma, brings disease and death in its melancholy progress. It is not a spirit that denies the divine origin of sacred truth; it will admit the Bible to be the book of God in the aggregate; yet so pares down or neutralizes all its leading principles and truths, as to leave God's holy word "a mere headless carcase, and a nameless thing." This spirit is chiefly indicated in seven particulars: 1 In excluding the divine interposition or agency, in controlling the affairs of men; merging the great First Cause in secondary and subordinate causes. 2. In divesting faith of its divine origin and efficacy, and defining it as the mere process of intellectual argumentation. 3. In the low and meagre observance of the Lord's day. 4. The lamentable destitution of religious culture and principle, in the literary institutions of the country. 5. A spurious latitudinarianism, candour, or liberalism, which confounds all just distinctions of Christian doctrine. 6. In permitting the laws of political economy to displace the revealed and unalterable law of God. 7. In an increased prejudice against Christian governments and Christian communion of all kinds. These seven particulars exert a conjoined influence of a fatal character on large masses of the British population. The last feature just stated will occasionally come under our notice, and its effects will be more

distinctly portrayed; and, in the pursuit of this inquiry, must be observable the aim of certain men to render the Christian ministry powerless, pointless, and fruitless.

II. *The Laws of Methodism, which interdict illegal Meetings and Irresponsible Correspondence, and which the Central Association contravenes, are explicit in their enactment.*—"Part of the Leaders meet together on Sunday evening, without any connexion with, or dependence on, the Assistant (that is, Superintendent). We have no such custom in the three kingdoms. *It is overturning our discipline from the foundation.* Either let them act under the direction of the Assistant, or let them meet no more. It is true they can contribute money for the poor, but we dare not sell our discipline for money." (*Minutes*, 1776.)

"To prevent, as much as possible, the progress of strife and debate, and consequent divisions in our Connexion, no pamphlet or printed letter shall be circulated among us, without the author's name, and the carriage or postage paid." (*Minutes*, 1795.)

"No man, nor number of men, in our Connexion, on any account or occasion, shall circulate letters, call Meetings, do or attempt to do any thing *new*, till it has been appointed by the Conference." (*Minutes*, 1796.)

"As the Leaders' Meeting is the proper Meeting for the society, and the Quarterly Meeting for the Circuit, we think that other formal Meetings in general would be contrary to the Methodist economy, and very prejudicial in their consequences; but, in order to be as tender as possible, consistently with what we believe to be essential to the welfare of our societies, we allow that other formal Meetings may be held, if they first receive the approbation of the Superintendent, and the Leaders' or Quarterly Meeting; provided also, that the Superintendent, if he please, be present at every such Meeting. The Quarterly Meeting rejecting a new rule shall not, by publications, or otherwise, make that rule a cause of contention; but shall strive, by every means, to preserve the peace of the Connexion." (*Minutes*, 1797.)

"In some Leaders' Meetings votes have been taken in given instances whether the fixed and established rules of Methodism, as printed in the General Minutes, should be executed or not. What shall be done to prevent this evil in future? All our rules are *equally* binding on both the Preachers and the people; and, therefore, every Superintendent who permits a vote to be taken on the

execution or rejection of them, shall, on proof at the ensuing Conference, be deprived of the office of Superintendent." (*Minutes*, 1806.)

"No Preacher shall print or reprint any thing for the time to come, till it is corrected by Mr. Wesley." (*Minutes*, 1782.)

"No books are to be published without Mr. Wesley's sanction; and those which are approved of by him shall be printed at his press in London, and sold by his book-keeper." (*Minutes*, 1789.)

"As the Preachers are eminently one body, nothing should be done by any individual, which would be prejudicial to the whole, or to any part thereof. Therefore, no Preacher shall publish any thing but what is given to the Conference, and printed at our own press."

"Several of the Preachers whose writings have been highly approved of agreed to the above regulations merely to restrain improper persons from publishing; the peace and honour of the Connexion outweighing, with them, every other consideration." (*Minutes*, 1796.)

After reading these extracts, will any sober, honest man assert there is no prohibitory law in Methodism on these points? Whether the interdict be good or evil, is not our present inquiry; that will be examined in the sequel. Prodigious efforts are, however, employed to persuade great masses of people that the holding of illegal Meetings is no infraction of Wesleyan discipline! Is the denial of the above documentary evidence to be attributable to a *weak* head, or a *base* heart? The Minutes were published long ago to the world; "the thing was not done in a corner;" and the records were deemed by the people for many years as valid documents of Wesleyan legislation. Whatever factious spirits existed in the *former* day, they usually had decency enough to admit that Methodist law was violated by the formation of irresponsible associations; and their hostility usually terminated either in prompt cessation of hostilities, or in speedy, honourable withdrawal. It was reserved to the *soi-disant* "Wesleyan Reformers" of the present day, to assume the daring and disreputable attitude of denying what is written as with a sun-beam in the Wesleyan journals. The factions of the former period indicated another extenuating feature, that, while they writhed under the interdict with perhaps equal acerbity and turbulence, they hoped some *good* object, which they could not divine, might possibly justify the Conferential prohibitions. They disliked the interdict, yet retained a diminished veneration for their Ministers. The present faction have given abundant and melancholy proofs they hate

both measures and men. On these points more will be offered; enough is said to show that the prohibition is most explicit in its enactment.

III. *The Wesleyan Interdict is perhaps the highest compliment paid to the good sense and Christian confidence of the Societies.*—A man must be very dull not to perceive that while the Conference is dependent on the people for supplies, every command authoritatively given must be a high compliment to the Connexion. The greater the requisition, the greater the honour. Perhaps the highest compliment ever paid to any religious sect by its Ministers in any age, is the interdict the Conference invariably issues against the holding of illegal Meetings; for there can be no medium between the highest dignity, and the most absurd effrontery, in this singular part of the Wesleyan economy. Small minds cannot discern this, and prejudiced hearts will not credit it; in both instances it strains their intellects, and makes them feel very uncomfortable. To minds recollecting the dependence of the Conference on the people for subsistence, the interdict is susceptible of an interpretation the very reverse of what pervades the writings and speeches of the “Wesleyan Reformers;” and must be ever so, until these *illuminati* prove that the Conference possess interests and resources separate from the voluntary aid of the societies. The Conference never degraded the understandings of the societies, by telling them they had no civil or natural right to meet when and where they chose; but the Conference have repeatedly declared, that the voluntary relinquishment is favourable to the spiritual interests of Methodism, and that the interdict is essential to the maintenance of the discipline of the body. On the ground of mutual confidence, the Conference issued the interdict, and the societies yielded to it; and the arrow of the Reformer must be levelled at this mutual confidence before his outcry of tyranny can gain a favourable reception.

IV. *The Interdict is defensible and necessary on the ground of the Wesleyan body constituting one vast incorporation, and not a union of Independent Churches.*—Inattention to this important distinction constitutes the capital error in judgment of the Central Association. The principles of Independency and the principles of a Connexion never can harmonize. A church really independent can neither give nor take interference, however serious or necessitous the case; the inviolability of its own jurisdiction absolutely

forbidding all interposition whatever. Circumvallated and inaccessible, it presumes on its own competency to meet and overcome every exigency that may transpire within its own inclosure. It is true, Independent churches may coalesce to defend themselves against a common but *external* enemy; but cannot apply that coalition to questions of internal and individual polity. What is the primary inducement of Independent churches to coalesce? Is it to save one another? No; for though that may be *one* motive; yet it is not *the* motive; for each church, conscious of being unable to conquer the foe, and dreading its own extinction, coalesces to save itself. But, if a foe arises *within*, what then can be done? Nothing. Its Independency is its ruin!

The principle of exclusiveness, which aforesaid refused interference, now closes the avenue to all redress. Two circumstances may occur to break up the church modelled on the principle of Independency: 1. When the majority of its members resist Christian discipline, or espouse heterodox tenets. 2. When the minority of numbers becomes the majority of influence, and that influence is employed to bribe and corrupt the Minister in his pastoral fidelity. In either case nothing can save that church from apostasy or extinction. Here, then, the advantages assumed to be enjoyed by an Independent church are more than counterbalanced by its incapability of grappling with such a critical case. A Connexion, modelled as the Wesleyan body is, can alone surmount a difficulty of this sort; and will not be subject to fluctuations like small and Independent churches.* There is no alternative between the adoption of Independency, with its inherent impotence, or the adoption of a Connexion with its strength. In the former case a lay and ministerial oligarchy may conjoin to ride rough-shod over the majority of the people in that church with impunity, and the church must suffer without redress. In the latter case, the combined energy of the faithful societies may scatter a local contumacious faction to the four winds, and re-commence an interest modelled on its pure and primitive structure. By this Connexional power, the flag unfurled on the hill by the herald of salvation, continues to wave in the sight of God's people, which otherwise would have been struck to the earth by the demon of discord. The Superintendent exercises

* A few years ago, at * * * every member left the society except one member; in one year afterwards every member returned except one. What saved, or rather regained, the church in that place? The power of the Connexion to grapple with the faction; which under an Independency must have been irretrievably ruined.

a power, to which he has been inducted, to execute laws consentaneously enacted for the common good. Whatever discretionary powers may be appended to his constitutional prerogatives, those discretionary powers must not abrogate or pervert the original and true spirit of the constitution. The same principle which prohibits the ruler from abusing either his constitutional or his discretionary powers, also obligates him to guard those laws from being abrogated or perverted by others. He is guardian of law, as well as administrator. These preliminary notices are requisite to a just interpretation of Conference conduct in critical cases. To the Superintendent is committed a certain locality, or section of the Wesleyan field, to be imbued with a Methodist ministry, to be planted with Wesleyan doctrines, and guarded by Wesleyan discipline; but the whole enclosure of the Connexion is in the occupancy of the constitution. God and the Conference require of the Superintendent to cultivate the plot assigned him, in the best way and to the greatest extent. Now, the special design of the Pacification was to establish such an interposing counsel, authority, and protection, equally remedial to the Superintendent, or people, of any locality; as that spiritual cultivation should not be obstructed, either by the arbitrary caprice of a Superintendent on the one hand, or by the contumacy of a faction on the other. Moral culture must go on, under any circumstance, or against any opposition. If a Superintendent from inability could not, or from misrule would not, cultivate the ground allotted him, the constitution removed him, though nothing immoral implicated *his* character.

By parity of reason, if a faction will not be cultivated, but obstruct the legitimate ends of a ministry, then the constitution removes the members of the faction, though nothing immoral otherwise implicate *their* character. In the *former* case the society, by appealing to the District, or to the Conference, may obtain, and they have frequently obtained, efficient redress, against the misrule, personal caprice, apathy, or inability of the Superintendent. In the *latter* case the Superintendent and society are protected in the legitimate and scriptural exercise of rights and privileges, against a powerful faction, or defection of the society; which, under an Independency, must have resulted in submission to the faction, or separation from the church. Thus any particular locality of the Connexion is protected from doctrinal or disciplinary innovation or obstruction so far as Conferential interposition can be available. If this interposing power form the palladium of the system, without

which the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" cannot be maintained, the instrument wielding it, and the circumstances accompanying it, are comparatively of minor moment.

From these remarks, is it not most obvious, that the interdict is most essential to the healthy working of the system? Does not every man know, who has the least pretensions to a knowledge of human affairs, that four or five litigious men, writhing under the wholesome infliction of church discipline, are capable of producing an unfavourable impression on the minds of many hundreds, towards a measure very salutary and very necessitous? Does not the Prophet affirm, that "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry?" (1 Sam. xv. 23.) How easy to persuade men they are badly governed! There is a thread running through the whole warp of the Wesleyan Reformer's web, that too plainly indicates the existence of a substratum of motive, that will not yield, it is to be feared, solid comfort in a dying hour, or that will bear the scrutiny of the judgment day.

V. *The Members of the Association are obviously at variance with each other, in their interpretation of the Law of Pacification.*—One party avers that the Regulations of 1797 retained the sole power in the hands of the Preachers; that the concessions were specious, not real; and that the system is still an unaltered and unamenable aristocracy. The other party, however, stoutly maintains, that the Conference admitted the societies to the co-executive, and that the Connexion was metamorphosed into a republican legislature. Neither party is correct. To place this highly important subject in its true light, it is needful to take a connected comprehensive view of the events of 1794, 1795, 1796, and 1797. The tragedy of the French Revolution had just been exhibited. The long-concealed and cruel atrocities of Jesuitical and inquisitorial power were uncurtained. The cry of, "Down with priestcraft!" reverberated throughout Europe. Fear and dismay covered the land; and, amidst the awful agitations, the Wesleyan Connexion began to be excited by other causes than the original dispute respecting the sacrament. The societies foresaw real or imaginary evils, and became extremely uneasy. Uneasiness ripened in several places to almost total insubordination, and the Connexion was greatly agitated. Illegal or "separate" Meetings were very frequent, and the details of grievances and remedies sprung up in thick luxuriance. In this crisis the Conference saw that concessions must be made, or the

Connexion would suffer. Concessions were made, but not sufficiently ample to silence the clamours of all ; the great mass of the societies were perfectly satisfied ; tranquillity was restored, the storm subsided, and the blessed work of conversion was again visible in the immediate and continuous enlargement of the societies.

The "Law of Pacification," as the phrase imports, necessarily involved the cessation of mutual hostilities. In what way had hostilities been evinced? 1. On the part of some Preachers, who, in moments of irritation, or through personal pique, had expelled good men ; who had withheld the accounts of the disbursements of money confided to their care ; who made new laws and abrogated old laws, without consulting the mind of the Connexion. 2. On the part of the societies, hostility had been kept up by inflammatory publications, and "separate" Meetings ; most unwarrantable and factious obstructions to the legitimate exercise of the ministerial function had been perpetrated. This was the true posture of affairs, with only slight intermissions, for three or four years prior to the assembling of Conference on August 1, 1797. At length the dawn of the *third era* of Methodism arrived ; the delegates, commissioned by sundry societies to negotiate with Conference, on controverted points, repaired to Leeds. At first, the delegates took high ground, and urged the Conference to admit laymen to the co-executive ; the overture was declined ; the claims were repeatedly urged ; the Conference continued inflexible. The language of the Conference, throughout the trying business, was firm, dignified, and pastoral ; and presents a splendid specimen of the "*suaviter in modo et fortiter in re.*"

"The Conference, having maturely considered the subject (of delegates) are thoroughly persuaded, with many of our societies, whose letters have been read in full Conference, that they cannot admit any but regular Travelling Preachers into their body, either in the Conference or District Meetings, and preserve the system of Methodism entire, particularly the itinerant plan, which they are determined to support." (*Minutes, 1797.*)

The delegates, finding the Conference to be impregnable on this point, abandoned the delegation-affair ; and, in lieu, required a distinct guarantee on three points: 1. That no man should be clandestinely expelled through private pique. 2. That no new enactment should be obligatory upon the societies, without an opportunity being allowed them of expressing approval or disapproval, before the law was confirmed. 3. To publish their financial accounts.

To these wishes the Conference promptly assented ; the modified plan of discipline was mutually approved ; and the delegates reported the result to their societies. This Magna Charta of Wesleyan rights was not unconditionally surrendered ; the societies on their part had, by their delegates, pledged themselves to abandon their irregular and illegal Meetings, and irresponsible correspondence and publications. No mathematical truism can be more evident to an impartial reviewer of the whole events, than that the new plan and the interdict stand or fall together. Take both, or reject both ; if both be taken, then the Association must crumble to dust ; if both be rejected, then the system reverts to the *second era* of an irresponsible ministerial aristocracy.

VI. *As the Modified Plan and the Interdict are inseparably associated, it must follow that Members of the Association may be constitutionally expelled.*—This conclusion may taste very unpalatable to the man of rights, to the “ Wesleyan Reformer ; ” yet the induction is perfectly legitimate. The man’s previous moral consistency, pacific habit, or efficient discharge of official duty, does not displace the argument ; it merely proves that he has a much better heart than head ; and offers, of course, a powerful motive of forbearance towards the man. Yet too high a price may be set upon such a man. He may, perhaps, without any *malus animus*, become the nucleus or converging point around which a set of worthless demagogues may rally, and employ his moral worth to give point and power to contumacious and revolutionary designs ; and no alternative is left but either to expel the man, and thus scatter the faction ; or retain him unconstitutionally, and, with him, an incubus blighting the healthful working of the sacred ministry in that locality.

The Wesleyan Reformers are quite awake to this advantage ; hence, how eager to trumpet forth their patron as the paragon of all Christian gifts and graces ! The man may have been an average good fellow ; but how comes it to pass that his *protégés*, who had seen these resplendent virtues so long, were mute in his praise, until their own sinister views called forth the long arrears of parasitical eulogy ? Due regard, of course, will be paid to the degree of contumacy, malignity of design, or activity of proselytism indicated by the offenders. Excision is the extreme penalty ; and nothing but a thorough conviction that the unity of the church is endangered, that the simple of heart are exposed to incalculable injury,

can justify its application. The old adage applies here with full force, *bonis nocet, quisquis pepercit malis*; and its truth is apparent to any well-ordered mind.

VII. *In the Debates, Letters, Correspondence, &c., of the Association, may be observed a most melancholy absence of what the Sacred Oracles have declared on the subject of the Church of Christ.*—This guilty omission admits of no palliation. The will of God is explicitly revealed on this point. Does not this practically “take away from the words of the book of this prophecy?” The sum total of the Anti-Wesleyan movement goes on the assumption that the Pastors and the people are co-existent and co-ordinate; it may be the Reformers disclaim the theory, but their published opinions and intentions prove the fact to all intents and purposes. A contemporary writer speaks well on the point:—“It is my decided conviction that in many of our churches, the Pastor is depressed far below his just level. He is considered merely in the light of a speaking brother. He has no official distinction or authority. He may flatter like a sycophant, he may beg like a servant, he may woo like a lover, but he is not permitted to enjoin like a ruler. His opinion is received with no deference, his person treated with no respect; and in the presence of some of his lay tyrants, if he say any thing at all, it must be somewhat similar to the ancient soothsayers; for he is only permitted to peep and mutter from the dust. The tyranny of a Minister has some shadow of excuse, in the circumstance of his being invested with an office, the duties of which are not defined with accuracy; but the tyranny of a church over their Pastor is without apology, for they have no office, and therefore no power.” *

The advocates of equal claims must be prepared to show, 1. That the offices of Trustee, Leader, Steward, &c., are co-ordinate with the ministerial power. 2. That the qualifications to sustain these offices are derived from other sources than the teaching of Christianity. 3. In the event of the ministerial functions ceasing, these subordinate officers can carry on all the ordinances, institutions, and designs of a church. The futility of such a supposition may be easily shown; and every subordinate officer, who thinks at all, must allow his office to be derivative or secondary, and not primary.

In what way can this authority be more leniently manifested, to

* J. A. James on Christian Fellowship. Second Edition, p. 60.

be visible at all, than by prescribing the mode or form, to be afterwards offered to general sanction or rejection? If the societies prescribe the form or mode, they would be the legislators, and not the Conference; if the Conference and societies conjointly prescribe the mode, then would exist no superiority, but a strict equality; and this equality is a gross infraction of the divine command. There may be, however, different grades of participation without co-legislation; but where strict co-legislation exists, where the people become co-existent and co-ordinate with the ministerial power, action ceases; all things remain *in statu quo*; all effective motion stops. The disputed question vibrates from people to Ministers, and from Ministers to people, like the oscillations of a pendulum; and must continue so to do, until the question is either determined by an appeal to a higher tribunal, or the two parties, by mutual concurrence, consent to abandon the measure altogether. Men may argue how they will, but there is an obedience of some kind most distinctly enjoined in the sacred Scriptures. A Christian Minister is divinely called to preach the Gospel; collect converts into Christian communion; to watch over them; to promote public piety by reproof, comforting, teaching, admitting, expelling, as occasions need; and to transmit the doctrines, discipline, and privileges of a church, unimpaired and uncorrupted, to successive agents. "And I will give you Pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." (Jer. iii. 15.) "And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; for they are most rebellious." (Ezek. ii. 7.) "For the Priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." (Mal. ii. 7.) "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." (Luke x. 16.) "That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth." (1. Cor. xvi. 16.) "For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed." (2 Cor. x. 8.) "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction." (2 Cor. xiii. 10.) "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves." (1 Thess.

v. 12, 13.) "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." (2 Thess. iii. 14.) "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." "Obey them which have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." (Heb. xiii. 7, 17.)

What will the Central Association say to all this? It is surely incumbent on these men, either to deny the authority of Christian rulers altogether, or to benefit the world with something definite on the subject? The Connexion has had quite enough of *brutum fulmen* poured forth in vague generalities. What is the obedience? Tell the world in specific terms, that the simple of heart may go in the right path. As the gentlemen of the Association would feign to persuade the Connexion that Mr. Wesley's opinion shall be law, a *ne plus ultra* oracle on the subject, hear what he says on the obedience of people to their Pastors: "It may be of use to consider, in what instances it is the duty of Christians to obey and submit themselves to those that watch over their souls. Now the things which they enjoin must be either enjoined of God, or forbidden by him, or indifferent. In things forbidden of God, we dare not obey them; for we are to obey God rather than man. In things enjoined of God, we do not properly obey *them*, but our common Father. Therefore, if we are to obey them at all, it must be in things indifferent. The sum is, it is the duty of every private Christian, to obey his spiritual Pastor, by either doing, or leaving undone, any thing of an indifferent nature; any thing that is in no way determined in the word of God. But how little is this understood in the Protestant world! at least in England and Ireland. Who is there, even among those that are supposed to be good Christians, who dreams there is such a duty as this? And yet there is not a more express command, either in the Old or New Testament. No words can be more clear and plain; no command more direct and positive. Therefore, certainly, none who receive the Scripture as the word of God can live in the habitual breach of this, and plead innocence. Such an instance of wilful, or, at least, careless disobedience, must grieve the Holy Spirit of God. It cannot but hinder the grace of God from having its full effect upon the heart. It is not improbable, that this very disobedience may be one cause of the deadness of many souls; one reason of their not receiving those blessings which they seek with some degree of sincerity.

“You that read this do you apply it to yourselves? Do you examine yourselves thereby? Do not you stop your own growth in grace; if not by wilful disobedience to this command, yet by careless inattention to it; by not considering it as the importance of it deserves? If so, you defraud yourself of many blessings, which you might enjoy. Or, are you of a better mind, of a more excellent spirit? Is it your fixed resolution, and your constant endeavour, ‘to obey them that have the rule over you in the Lord?’ To submit yourselves as cheerfully to your spiritual as to your natural parents? Do you ask, ‘Wherein should I submit to them?’ The answer has been given already: Not in things enjoined of God; not in things forbidden by him; but in things indifferent: In *all* that are not determined, one way or the other, by the oracles of God. It is true, this cannot be done, in some instances, without a considerable degree of self-denial, when they advise you to refrain from something that is agreeable to flesh and blood. And it cannot be obeyed in other instances, without taking up your cross; without suffering some pain or inconvenience, that is not agreeable to flesh and blood. For that solemn declaration of our Lord has place here, as well as on a thousand other occasions: ‘Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple.’ But this will not affright you, if you resolve to be not only almost, but altogether a Christian: If you determine to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. Be assured of one thing; the more conscientiously you obey your spiritual guides, the more powerfully will God apply the word, which they speak in his name, to your heart. The more plentifully will he water what is spoken, with the dew of his blessing; and the more proofs will you have, it is not only they that speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaketh in them.”*

Until the Central Association shall have enlightened the Conference and the people with a luminous *exposé*, 1. Of matters wherein Christian Pastors may govern: 2. Of matters wherein they must not govern; the Connexion must be content to adopt what the sacred Scriptures and Mr. Wesley have recorded on the subject. It is not at all in good keeping to hear men talk about their consciences not permitting them to obey, and the same men preserving a total silence on matters requiring prompt and unreserved submission.

VIII. *Admitting the Legality of separate Meetings, yet it is*

* Wesley's Sermon, “On Obedience to Pastors.”

obvious that the numerical Inequality of the Circuits would deprive the greater part of the Connexion of the advantages contemplated by unlimited Discussion.—According to the Minutes of 1834, there are forty Districts and three hundred and sixty-nine Circuits in Great Britain. In most instances, the District town contains the largest society in the District, though not always, as in the case of the Bedford, Lynn, Oxford, Portsmouth, Exeter, Bath, Birmingham, Bolton, Halifax Districts.

Twenty-two of the District towns contain on an average one thousand eight hundred and ninety-six members each, namely, London First, London Second, Norwich, Portsmouth, Redruth, Bristol, Bath, Birmingham, Macclesfield, Liverpool, Manchester First, Halifax, Leeds East, Sheffield West, Derby, Nottingham, Hull, York, Whitby, Newcastle, Douglas, Bradford. The remaining eighteen District towns contain on an average eight hundred and forty-one members, namely, Lynn, Oxford, Northampton, Guernsey, Exeter, Canterbury, Devonport, Swansea, Merthyr-Tydvile, Ruthen, Shrewsbury, Lincoln, Carlisle, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Darlington, Bedford, and Bolton. The Hull District presents a tolerably accurate portraiture or sample of all the Districts in Great Britain. Each Circuit averages in the aggregate twenty country places, seven miles distant from the Circuit town. In the populous Districts among the miners of Cornwall, the colliers of Staffordshire and Northumberland, and the weavers of Yorkshire, a rather different schedule might appear; but the difference is fully counterbalanced by the sterile, thinly populated Districts of many parts of Britain. Let the *eighteen* less populous District towns be substituted by other eighteen more populous Circuit towns, namely, London Third, London Fourth, London Fifth, London Sixth, Truro, Penzance, Dudley, Manchester Third, Leeds West, Huddersfield, Sunderland, St. Austle, Louth, Liverpool South, Wednesbury, Stockport, Bramley, and Birstal, whose average number of members shall be two thousand and twenty-four members. These latter eighteen Circuit towns, added to the former twenty-two, constitute the largest forty societies in Great Britain. To some of these Circuit towns, very few country places and members are adjoined, as at Hull, Birmingham, &c. Other Circuits, however, diffuse their members equally over the whole Circuit, as Dudley, Louth, Wednesbury, &c. In order to simplify the statements, and to allow the objector every possible advantage; let the whole forty towns, containing in round numbers eighty thousand members, be supposed to contain their members and officers

within the respective towns, and to have no country-interest attached; there will remain three hundred and twenty-nine Circuits quoting an amount of two hundred and ten thousand members, whose officers, institutions, duties, interests, &c., are equally diffused over the whole range of ground. The conditions of the argument show, that less than one-third of the Connexion is able, with convenience and promptitude, to meet for discussion either personally or by proxy, and above two-thirds of the Connexion are on an average *seven* miles distant from their Circuit towns; and, of course, the right of discussion, if used, must be accompanied by its corresponding difficulties. Though this estimate may not be numerically exact, yet it is sufficiently accurate to show the condition of the societies in relation to the present question.

The preceding arguments are offered on the assumption that the societies both can and will avail themselves of this simultaneous movement, and will continue to employ themselves sedulously to the *talking* duties which the Association would enjoin. But the history of Methodism, and indeed of every church, shows that so far from the mass of the people either feeling or acting vigorously, there is a manifestly strong and general repugnance to engage in official duties that may divert their minds from domestic duties, literary pursuits, or commercial engagements. Scarcely one in twenty of the members of populous towns give themselves much concern about vestry matters. The executive at last falls into the hands of very few, more from the apathy of the multitude, than from any aggressions on the part of active men. Let the Association take this into the account, and the numbers will be greatly reduced; and when we superadd the pleasing fact, that the confidence of the majority of the people reposes in the administration as it is now usually worked; the number of men which the Association can calculate as their servants, "honest men and true," will dwindle to the most insignificant diminutiveness.

IX. *The Association would be partially confined to the populous Towns, to the exclusion of the general Societies; or be attended by immense Inconvenience and Expense.*—Were the expediency to be fairly made out, it has already been shown that facilities for discussion could scarcely be available to eighty thousand members; but the remaining two hundred and ten thousand members are, on an average, seven miles distant from their Circuit towns. As theories are only valuable so far as their goodness is visible in practical application; it is incumbent on the MAN OF RIGHTS to show in

what way the uniform and equitable expression of public opinion can be obtained, without tampering with the rights of man ; without his passing by the privileges of the majority. Are the eighty thousand town gentry to cater for the two hundred and ten thousand country members ? When great sticklers for "civil rights" have worked up themselves like "ocean into tempest tost ;" have hoisted a black flag that neither gives nor takes quarter ; have ceased to repose honourable confidence in the piety, wisdom, and integrity of their spiritual rulers, and must have law for every punctilio ; they cannot object to see their theory carried to ultimate results. Unquestionably the object to be obtained ought to be *very good* and *very great* to call forth the simultaneous movement and attention of the societies. Let such a case, then, be supposed to occur, and mark its accompaniments. The populous towns and country Circuits are desired, by circular letters, to repair to their respective arenas of debate ; to discuss the eligibility of a proposed measure. The populous towns perhaps may muster a goodly number of disputants ; especially while the novelty is great, and the zest is sharp ; but how will it fare with the country Circuits, which comprise two-thirds of the Connexion ? Here are about seven thousand societies obliged to traverse *seven* miles to the scene of action, loaded to the muzzle with a set speech, which perhaps cannot be let off till after repeated adjournments. This is outrageously vexing ; but what is to be done ? Travel again and again, to be sure, till the business is done. Remember the old proverb, *vincit amor patriæ*, "the love of country surmounts all difficulties." As the "man of rights" sets out on the principle that the proper authorities either cannot or will not do their duty, he is doubly obligated to discharge his own, in spite of wind and weather. This theory recognises but little accommodation, or confidence. If it be good and valid Methodism to permit indiscriminate discussion by any men, at any time or place, it certainly behoves these *new lights* to accomplish their work in a workmanlike manner ; for, to whatever decisions the Association may arrive, those decisions ought certainly to express the true mind of the societies at large, before they can be proposed to the Conference, or adopted by the Connexion. Every man not insane must allow this. The interest, duties, and rights of a Methodist living in a country Circuit of three hundred members, are as valid, sacred, and important, as those of a member resident in a populous town of three thousand members ; and, if the proportion of pecuniary support form the rule of preference, the members of populous towns would be found in the back-ground of the question.

But it has been already shown that the majority are so circumstantially placed in reference to one another, that the chief purposes for which the Association would be ordinarily wanted could not be efficiently managed by them; of course, there can be no alternative between reposing the executive in its present administration, or letting the work remain undone altogether.

X. *To Establish the Eligibility of the Association, it must be shown that the Number of regular and accredited Officers is inadequate to the Management of Business.*—No machinist encumbers his machinery with needless appendages. Simplicity and necessity are his guiding principles. Look at the Connexion modelled upon the principle of the Association upon a large scale. What a *bulbus excrescens*, or unwieldy appendage to the whole polity! The Association must be adopted to a very considerable extent to answer any efficient purposes, or to influence the present legislature. Is the Association to supersede the ordinary administrations, to co-legislate with them, or to be subordinate to them? One of the three conditions must take place. Try the question on the *first* principle, namely, that the Association shall displace the ordinary vestry-business. In what posture will this management of things place the Connexion? Will the *busy* men become *responsible* men, if matters do not turn out agreeably to calculation? Or will Mr. Mark Robinson, the Rev. J. R. Stephens, or Dr. Warren, after having been successively the great toe of the concern, foremost in every step, manage matters so adroitly as to leave their luckless adherents to pay the piper? This has been the case more than once in reference to secessions from Methodism. If the Association is to supersede the ordinary vestry-business, what pledge can be offered by them; since there are no official responsibilities associated with them? They are a mere rope of sand in any critical juncture. Look at the broad ambiguous principles of the Association. It knows no selection of character, or responsibility of person. Any member, whatever may be his station or inadequacy, may go and vote; he is a man, and that is enough. Will any man be at a loss to know to whom to give the palm of adequacy? On a low computation there are at this time, at least, twenty thousand men who hold official stations in the Connexion. If these twenty thousand men discharge their duty, would the Association be then expedient? No. But if the twenty thousand will *not* fulfil their duty, can the Association make them? No. So that whether the vestrymen discharge their duty or not, the

remedy against misrule must be derived from some other source than from separate meetings. Argue the case, secondly, on the supposition that the separate meetings shall not supersede ordinary usages, but merely act in unison with the vestry. Business will go on very pleasantly so long as their views, motives, principles, and designs mutually coincide. If, however, the resolutions of the two boards essentially differ, which the posture of affairs must logically assume, what steps can the Conference adopt to satisfy both parties? It is too late to lament the formation of the Association. The business may be so definite and specific as to shut out a middle path altogether. The Wesleyan Constitution is not like the British Constitution. The King may dissolve his Parliament; and, by repeatedly protracting the debates, may finally adjust the question so as not to seriously offend many of his subjects. The Conference were thus critically placed about forty years ago in reference to the administration of Christian ordinances; and though the most heartless buffoonery has been poured upon their conduct, they nevertheless felt their situation to be painful, awful, and critical. They wept, fasted, and prayed; and the best of all was, God was with them, and counselled them. If the question be argued, thirdly, on the ground that all the deliberations of separate meetings may be modified or rejected at the ordinary tribunals; that the "civil rights" of discussion must be subordinated to the accredited and constituted authorities; this sets the question at rest so far as the original design of indiscriminate discussion is involved.

XI. If the Association be reserved for emergent Cases, and not applied to ordinary Business, the Unfrequency of those Meetings is hazardous to the right Management of critical Cases.—In the fulfilment of a difficult diplomacy with a foreign power, what kind of envoy would a Government choose to send? One, certainly, of business habits; one whose diplomatic competency has grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength. In the event, then, of any critical transactions between the societies and the Conference, which would be more likely to conduct the case safely? the Association; or the general vestries of the Connexion? A splendid specimen of the sagacity of Reforming Methodists occurred in the negotiations of 1797. At that time two Committees were respectively formed, by the lay delegates on the one hand, and Conference on the other, for the purpose of amicably settling several controverted points, touching the welfare of the Methodist societies. Their

deliberations were finally crowned with a termination alike satisfactory to both parties. Now, it must go some way in removing suspicion; as to the Conference designing to take any unfair advantage of the societies, to show, that the very proposition or article embraced by both parties was drawn up by the lay delegates themselves. The reader will perceive this by the following extract, which describes one day's proceedings:—"Resolved: That the Committee of this Meeting do confer with the Preachers' Committee on the following subjects, viz., 1. The answer of the Conference with respect to the Bristol case. 2. How far the Preachers will agree, that, when the Conference shall make any new rule for the societies at large, provided the Travelling Preachers find, at the first Quarterly Meeting, that the major part of that Meeting, in conjunction with the Preachers, are of opinion, that the enforcing of such rule in that Circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that Circuit, it shall not be enforced in opposition to the judgment of a Quarterly Meeting till after a second Conference. 3. How far the Conference will agree to submit any new rule that they wish to make for the Connexion, to the sanction of any Meeting of Trustees, Stewards, &c., sent to places where the Conference shall be held in future." Now, viewing the proposal exhibited above, as offered by the delegates for the consideration and adoption of Conference, and not artfully and originally framed by the latter *à priori*, to entrap our liberties, we ask, Wherein consists the justice either of the remark, which occurs in the first objection, that "this rule was drawn up under the direction of some of the most intelligent Preachers in the Conference, who must have been conscious that they had reserved the whole power in their own hands; or of that, which afterwards appears in the second objection, that here, again, a doubt has been expressed whether or not the latter part of this sentence in 'conjunction with the Preachers' is not intended to deprive the Quarterly Meeting of any power? The fact, that the very *terms* in which the former part of the seventh rule is couched were framed by the guardians of the people's rights, is alone a triumphant refutation of these insinuations."* Every word of severity which the Association-Gents. level against the verbal structure of the seventh article above quoted is either true or false. If true, this part of the principle is validated: if false, the mischief re-acts upon themselves without the means of eluding its force.

- XII. *On all Questions involving personal Character, the Deliberations of the Association will be found utterly inadequate to complete their Intention.*—This is a most serious consideration, the true philosophy of which seems to be very imperfectly understood. Separate Meetings have been often convened for the purpose of instituting rigid inquiry into an implicated character; which, after a war of words, generally expire like a South-Sea bubble; and their failure has been usually attributed to some countermining of the opposing party, and not to any inefficiency essentially inherent in the Meetings. The following illustration may elucidate the case in hand:—Intelligence has been received by two or three individuals in a religious society, which seriously implicates the moral character of their Minister. As the evidence of guilt is strongly presumptive, it is deemed requisite to hold a meeting of the Association. Of this meeting A, B, C, D, E, F, are the principal conductors. Many discussions and disclosures ensue; upon which are founded resolutions expressive of deep regret, and requesting the vestrymen to employ efficient means of redress. The impeached Minister demands, 1. The charge. 2. The accusers. 3. The evidence. The case is finally traversed to the District Meeting; to attend which, the six persons above mentioned are summoned. A, the accuser, goes fully into the case, and appeals to B and C to corroborate his testimony. The Minister, whose character and family subsistence depend on the issue of the trial, exerts his utmost strength to vitiate the evidence. Who can blame him? “Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life;” and for his character too, in a situation so sacred, where character is every thing. B and C, during their cross-examination, materially differ from their former statements. Not calculating that matters would arrive at such a crisis, they soften down those parts of the evidence which are heavily criminating. The accuser, A, who, in all probability is the best man of the half dozen, indignant at the vacillating of B and C, turns to D. D, whose sagacity scents mischief brooding, suddenly finds his memory defective, and nothing can be extracted from him but “*non mi recordo.*” The Court now calls upon E and F to deliver their sentiments. E confirms all that A advanced, and F strikes out a middle course. The Court acts under these circumstances as all tribunals ought to act; the defendant is entitled to the benefit of a doubt, and a verdict of *not guilty* is recorded on the journals. A and E repair homewards, and “in pensive sadness inly mourn” at the improbity and cowardice of mankind. The affair

does not rest here: A and E, who had fully calculated upon B, C, D, and F, as "honest men and true," now level their artillery at the traitorous four. Animosities thicken apace, and three or more of the half-dozen leave the Connexion, slip their cables, run out to sea, and are probably wrecked on the rocks of dissipation and impiety. Difficulties, of course, would necessarily accompany the case in a legitimate tribunal. These are not denied; and extraordinary courage and fidelity are necessary to carry a man through his charge against the character of a Minister. But the point at issue is to show that the Association fails to complete its intention. If the case, as shaped by the Association, be carried through the vestry tribunal unmutilated; still, the entire is re-discussed; and, consequently, the Association has amounted to—NOTHING!

But what says the history of all such cases? The very men who assisted, at the Association, in accumulating the subject to a ponderous and unwieldy mass, have shaped and pared it down to a snug portable size, when examined at the vestry tribunal. It affords no extenuation to say, that the six persons, above mentioned, were intimidated at the presence of the august personages in black attire. The redoubtable champions of the Association ought certainly to show pith and nerve, and to go on thoroughly with their business. No instance has yet occurred wherein an illegal or separate Meeting, though ostensibly convened with a most delicate feeling for their Minister, has effected any practical good; but, on the contrary, the most distressing recriminations at each other's cowardice have induced shyness, anger, heart-burnings, and a repulsiveness as odious and distant as Hindoo caste. A and E, above mentioned, having seen an end of all perfection, resolve in future to let delinquents go on in their delinquency, and comfort themselves that matters will ripen by and by, and that their sin will find them out. This conclusion of A and E is highly reprehensible, as remedies are available and influential.

XIII. *The Association would ultimately dissociate the Methodism of populous Towns from the Methodism of the Country at large.*—None but he who has well studied Methodism will fully perceive the truth and feel the force of this part of the proposition. To frame a code of laws upon a self-adjusting, flexible principle, which shall adapt itself to the *little* or to the *great*; to the *wise* or to the *ignorant*; to the *minute* or to the *expansive*; and still to retain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; requires a special divine

influence, little short of plenary inspiration. This universal adaptation of the Wesleyan Connexion, to accomplish the great ends of a church, either among a dense population, or in a sterile soil, where its members are few and far between, by the same means, must argue coincidences of thought, judgment, and feeling, unaccountable on any other principle than a gracious, over-ruling Providence. If the Association, then, studies the good of all, they must do the same as Conference has hitherto done; the two administrations would move in perfect harmony; and like the two opposite wheels of a chariot would describe an uniform parallel line on the sand, whether the vehicle moved in right lines or curves. But if the Association had its own interests specially in view, the very subjects deliberated would have a necessary tendency to bisect the whole connexion. In all populous towns there has ever been a powerful inclination to blend showy and brilliant appendages with Christian ordinances. Is it not then obvious that all those parts of the Wesleyan system, not in keeping with the "reform" style, would be rejected by those who had the power to select? And is it not also apparent that the same power to select would be employed by them to the serious detriment of the societies at large; like the large buyers picking up the prime samples, and leaving the small dealers to manage for themselves. Say the fifty largest Circuits are in habits of indiscriminate convocation and intercourse; in what way could the Conference so adjust the rules of the Connexion, as to meet the demands of this *new* insulated interest, and still retain the unity of the body? Would not this strange and huge fungus on the tree of Methodism perpetually retard the uniform growth and fertility of the Connexion? The Deed of Declaration, which is the key stone of the whole fabric, must either annihilate the Association, or the Association would annihilate Methodism. The latter is impossible, owing to its legal character; and, as to the former, the spread of the Gospel by the instrumentality of Methodism will be to a serious extent retarded, so long as the conflict is maintained.

Hitherto the argument has been pursued on the assumption of a *good* motive influencing, and a *legitimate* question occupying, the Association, demanded by the "man of rights;" and their unadaptation to advance the spiritual interests of the Wesleyan societies must, it is presumed, be conceded by a candid mind. But the whole tenor of political and ecclesiastical history shows, that the establishment of irresponsible debate, an *imperium in imperio*, is utterly incompatible with the existence of the cause ostensibly professed to be advanced. Associations

of irresponsible structure are directly subversive of any constitution ; they directly tend to division ; whether their promoters primarily designed it or not, is quite another thing. Under what circumstances then would an Association be justifiable ? When doctrines are forced detrimental to your salvation, or when supplies are coerced against the law of God. Ought not brethren and Ministers to act in unison ? Have not men some special designs in attempts to mend matters of government ? Is not the Association, which cannot possibly embrace one third of the Connexion, a most unwarrantable liberty with the majority of the body ? Is not mutual confidence the ground of true liberty ? Is not liberty used too frequently as a cloak for licentiousness ? Cannot all subjects, adapted to extend and consolidate the unity of the body, be efficiently managed by the legitimate tribunals ? If the Conference did not peremptorily forbid the protracted discussion of new laws, and also interdict the re-debating of old laws previously adjusted, is it not obvious that the tranquillity of the body would be at the disposal of every demagogue ? No law exists to interdict legal or constitutional discussion. Is there not apostolical authority for sacrificing civil and natural rights ? The Conference calculated on the Christian forbearance, on the voluntary surrender of rights, abstractedly admitted indisputable, to avoid a greater evil ; and the man who calculates on any other order of things knows nothing of human society.

There is, however, another sacrifice demanded of the societies by the Wesleyan Conference, extraordinary in its requirements ; which, in all probability, originated the charge of a resemblance subsisting between Methodism and Papacy : Namely, the prohibition of epistolary correspondence between the members of different Circuits, on questions of Methodist legislation. The severest vituperations have been levelled against the Wesleyan Conference in consequence of this *non imprimatur* ; animadversions which the Conference could not so efficiently repel as the societies could, who had long and confidentially submitted to the interdict. Even men of respectable intelligence, forgetting all the collateral circumstances connected with the prohibition, have imagined this *non imprimatur* to embody all the essentials of the Papal doctrine of “ignorance is the mother of devotion ;” that the non-intercourse bill of Conference is a flagrant outrage on the liberties of the societies, which, by the restriction, are “treated as children and fools.” Of the *natural right* to correspond or discuss, no man doubts for a moment ; but to the *expediency* of irresponsible babbling and scribbling, there are many serious and

unanswerable objections, so far as the spread of the Gospel by the instrumentality of Methodism is involved. Some of these objections are subjoined, and are far from being all that may be urged.

XIV. *Epistolary Correspondence, however extensive and unrestricted, must necessarily convey defective Information, on questions of Legislation and Character.*—Who are to correspond? Any members indiscriminately, or only some officially? This point must be previously settled; yet its settlement will not be found very easy. Fix the question on the ground of *natural* rights, and all selection of character is totally set aside. Every raw youth, in his teens, may forthwith correspond; yea, correspond to be sure, and look as large in his own estimation, as the Secretary of State for the Foreign Department; and, until he gets thoroughly surfeited, may spend half his earnings in postages. “But this,” says an objector, “is ridiculous!” Very true; but who makes it so? As the liberal and popular scale must not be tampered with, who dare lay an embargo on the juveniles? “Due regard,” it is replied, “will be paid to character and station.” But, if the juveniles do not choose to pay “due regard” to the selection, what is to be done with them? “Exclude them, if very troublesome.” No; that is an outrage upon civil rights; your doctrine universally propagated is “Methodism excludes nobody by law, except for immorality.” Thou “man of rights” art transfixed on thy own weapon! for, if the Preachers have no right to deprive the people of any power or right, by what authority can *one* part of the people deprive *another* part of the people of any right? The correspondents must be either selected or unrestricted: if unrestricted, all the salutary purposes, contemplated by unfettered communication, will be vitiated by the conflicting evidence so heterogeneously amassed. This state of things admits of no remedy; for the unqualified scribblers, who have the *cacoethes scribendi*, will unquestionably out-number the judicious and deliberate correspondents. If, on the other hand, the correspondents be selected, of which every person must see the propriety, several items require to be adjusted: 1. The persons chosen. 2. By whom chosen. 3. Their functions defined. 4. In what way is the received intelligence to be employed? 5. From what resources are the expenses to be defrayed? 6. Is the correspondence to be perennial or occasional, perpetual or intermitting? These are not captious inquiries, but questions seriously involving the welfare of the societies, and which the “man of rights” is obligated

satisfactorily to answer. Is *every* Circuit to be furnished with its proper correspondent? Are some Circuits too little to be advantaged, or too insignificant to be consulted? As exclusion cannot comport with the Wesleyan Reformers' creed, *every* Circuit, of course, ought to have at least one correspondent. Again: By whom are the correspondents to be chosen? by the vestry-officers, or by the members at large? This is highly important, for the nature of their functions will be materially qualified by the source whence the functions are derived. If the correspondents be amenable to the vestry, the primary end of their appointment will be neutralised: viz., that of obtaining and employing information apart from the ordinary administration. If the correspondents be not amenable to the vestry, can the regular officers admit such communications into their debates, so as to ground thereon any resolutions? Admitting, however, that the choosers and the chosen be nicely adjusted, a much greater difficulty interposes as to the proper functions to be discharged. Are no rules to be deemed permanent and fundamental? Or, are the very stamina of the system to be re-discussed, as often as a knot of demagogues may think proper? Be it remembered the liberal and "*reform*" scale prohibits selection of subjects as well as of characters. Every man may do what is right in his own eyes, for unfettered communication hinders none. Amidst this incessant and restless locomotion of laws, can the fabric of personal piety and extended Christianity be matured? Impossible. These Association-reformers of Wesleyan Methodism, after treading to weariness, the quagmire of an unsettled constitution, will be glad to seek solid footing in a system whereon the mind may repose, and rest may be enjoyed. Their *new* constitution, having imbibed a permanent order or form, will be defended by them with as much tenacity as the *old* constitution had aforetime been defended by those whom they once severely vituperated. Society, civil or religious, must have a palpable permanent form of existence, not infallible or immutable, but embodying essential lineaments, without which the frame-work of society could not be held together. The propriety of imposing suitable restrictions, both as to the *persons* and *subjects*, must eventually force its way; the expediency would be increasingly imperative, till its necessity would assume the shape of express and positive law. Even restricted correspondence would not be found to serve all the salutary purposes laid down by many theorists, so far as Wesleyan Methodism is concerned. The unity of the body demands universality of information, before the projects of any

irresponsible Association could be safely adopted. The *scheme* may appear plausible; but who does not perceive it a hazardous experiment to apply a new scheme over a range of societies, embracing nearly three hundred thousand members, prior to an efficient communication with the societies? The inequality and expense militating against the Association will also frustrate any practical good contemplated by indiscriminate and unrestricted correspondence. It is immaterial what may be the subject, the difficulties will press on every side as the atmosphere around. On a moderate computation, about one thousand pounds would be expended by the Association in public meetings, and correspondence, on *every* single project, if the general societies take their due share of the debate; and if the major part of the societies be excluded, then comes on the societies, with tremendous havoc, the worst of all despotisms, the despotism of an irresponsible anarchy.

XV. *The Sentiments of the numerous Societies expressed apart from each other must collectively form the most accurate Opinion upon any Question submitted to general Ordeal.*—Is not this principle daily acted upon, even in commercial transactions, when the various candidates for a contract deliver tenders apart from each other? In what other mode could a natural spontaneous judgment of the Connexion be ascertained on a measure, otherwise than by a *separate* report of the Quarterly Meetings, being sent to Conference? Is not the principle strikingly illustrated in our courts of judicature? Are not the unexamined witnesses often kept out of court while Counsel are examining deponents? Why are such restrictions and exclusions permitted? To further the ends of justice, to elicit truth, to prevent the suborning of evidence. In what way would a man involved in a serious dilemma collect the opinion of the wise? By being closeted with his friends singly, and so collect unbiassed and unprejudiced sentiments. Ought not each Circuit to repose confidence in the *general* discernment of the whole body? The language of the Conference is dictated in very respectful terms; recollect the events of that era, when the mind of the Conference was made known to the societies. The most inflammatory publications had been issued; and had not the loyalty of the Connexion been repeatedly tried and acknowledged, the legal character of the Deed of Declaration would have been seriously endangered. Not a word was expressed about prohibiting discussion, or correspondence; for the sake of obtaining information. The Article simply says,

“The Quarterly Meetings shall not make that rule a *cause of contention*, but shall strive by every means to preserve the peace of the Connexion.” Ought not every man to preserve the unity of the body in the bond of peace? Are not four or five litigious men capable of producing an unfavourable impression on the minds of many hundred persons towards a design in itself valuable and salutary? First impressions are usually strong; are readily formed; and often without due regard to their truth or error. Almost all popular ferments are as ambiguously originated, as intensely excited. So the case was at Ephesus, when “some cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.” (Acts xix. 32.)

It is in the nature of fallen humanity to suspect evil of rulers; to ascribe evil properties to acts concealed from outward ken. Suspicion is the universal characteristic of Heathenism in every age, station, and clime. Christianity, however, thinketh no evil; hopeth all things; rejoiceth not in iniquity. Though patient and calm attention are necessary to comprehend the bearings and influences of the rules of the Wesleyan Connexion on the religious habits and happiness of the societies, yet there is no intricate casuistry or mysticism attached to them, that renders indiscriminate and unrestricted correspondence needful. It is next to impossible for three hundred and sixty-nine Circuits, comprising near twenty thousand officers, to form an inaccurate conception of rules submitted to their inspection.

XVI. *The existence of the numerous Sectaries, must necessarily counteract any baneful Influence, of which the Prohibition might be otherwise susceptible.*—Commercial monopolies are frequently hurtful, but a religious monopoly is ruinous to religious liberty; wherever the public are their own depositaries, no class of men can possibly usurp undue sway, so as seriously to affect spiritual privilege, without a most awful and culpable apathy on the part of the public. In this section of the argument, *three* parties are to be considered:—1. The *Conference*, prohibiting the indiscriminate correspondence of the societies. 2. The *Societies*, under this *interdict*. 3. The *public* under no such restrictions. The prohibition, be it remembered, has been issued under a distinct recognition of those British privileges that permit any man to set up for himself. There is no moral or political necessity for any man to submit; the Conference conceive the prohibition to be expedient; they must be aware they are not the sole depositaries of spiritual light, or the

arbiters of human destinies ; the societies have collateral sources of information over which the Conference never can have any control. "The schoolmaster is abroad in the world." The liberty of the press, the existence of numerous sects, the abounding of religious institutions, and a host of other circumstances, conjoin to render those enactments of the Conference affecting civil rights perfectly innocuous.

XVII. *The charge of "priestly domination and cruel tyranny," preferred against the Conference, by the Association, manifests a most ignorant or most malignant Disregard of the Mode in which the Connexion has acquired its present Structure.*

—On the truth or falsehood of this depends the whole controversy ; and to substantiate the truth of the writer's allegation, more minute and definite detail is necessary. The present sum total of the Wesleyan Constitution is composed of four portions : 1. Of the scriptural right to govern the Church, to which God and the people called the Ministers, subject to certain limitations. 2. Of certain elements, or principles, which Mr. Wesley himself had fixed unalterably. 3. Of minor appendages or regulations adopted from Mr. Wesley's death to the year 1797, and then mutually allowed by Preachers and Delegates to remain as a component part of the system. 4. Of the annual accumulation of *new* laws, successively enacted from 1797 to the present time. If the Association would define more explicitly their views, or say to which of the four portions of the system their grievances refer, great expense of time and feeling might be saved ; and candid men would be enabled to judge for themselves how far it is true that Conference so far "disregards all law, exercises absolute sway, treats with contempt most respectful addresses," as ere long to banish all "honest and upright men" from their communion.

As to the first portion, or scriptural authority of Pastors to rule, scarcely a syllable can be gathered from the pamphlets or debates of the Association, on this unaltered and unrepealable divine injunction. This, however, has been met in paragraph VII. As to the *second* portion, which has respect to the Conferential character of the body, how long will men continue to stultify themselves and others by their delegation prattle ? The pith of the subject relates solely to the fourth portion of the Constitution, or that part superadded by enactments passed since 1797 to which the societies have given their tacit or express concurrence. That the societies have an opportunity of

expressing their concurrence, or non-concurrence, of every rule is apparent, 1. From the letter of the law:—"If at any time the Conference see it necessary to make any new rule for the societies at large, and such rule should be objected to, at the first Quarterly Meeting in any given Circuit; and if the major part of that Meeting, in conjunction with the Preachers, be of opinion, that the enforcing of such rule in that Circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that Circuit; it shall not be enforced in opposition to the judgment of such Quarterly Meeting, before the second Conference. But if the rule be confirmed by the second Conference, it shall be binding to the whole Connexion." (*Minutes*, 1797.)

This, then, is the law; now for its availableness. If the number of Leaders whose classes fall short of twenty members be set off against Leaders of more than one Class, so that the average number of members to one Leader be twenty; the total number of Leaders in the Connexion at the present time will be about fourteen thousand five hundred and ninety-six. Deduct two thousand five hundred and ninety-six as the probable proportion of female Leaders who cannot scripturally "speak in the church," the net total will be twelve thousand Leaders. If the number of Local Preachers and Trustees, who are not Leaders, as also the Stewards, be considered one half more, the total number of available official votes, on any *new* rule; will show eighteen thousand votes for September, 1834. If this ratio be admissible, the actual number of votes, since 1797, will be as follows:—

Years.	Votes.	Years.	Votes.	Years.	Votes.	Years.	Votes.
1798	5164	1808	6996	1817	11620	1826	13863
1799	5502	1809	7926	1818	11706	1827	14233
1800	5419	1810	8280	1819	11776	1828	15000
1801	5311	1811	9036	1820	11473	1829	15261
1802	5517	1812	9607	1821	12021	1830	15310
1803	5769	1813	9732	1822	12684	1831	15360
1804	5838	1814	10434	1823	13158	1832	16286
1805	6100	1815	10902	1824	13615	1833	17213
1806	6648	1816	11502	1825	13719	1834	18000
1807	7710						

The total number of individual votes, since 1797, will amount to nearly four hundred thousand. To what extent have these votes been employed? probably not one in a thousand; here, then, is the point at issue. If the great majority of the people, year after year, neglect to employ constitutionally privileges conceded to them in

1797, where is the decency or truth of the charge alleged against Conference? The calumny is as false, as it is base. It is no relief or extenuation to maintain, that the Superintendents ought to have invited inquiry. No such thing. The Conference, by publishing the Minutes, to which every member in the Connexion may have access, do as much towards inviting scrutiny as can be rationally required of any governors, civil or religious. Whether the extreme rarity of the society "objecting to any new rule," be attributable to a vapid apathy, or, to an honourable confidence, the Conference could not interpret their silence in any other sense than an acquiescence.* The preceding remarks show that the entire of the Constitution is not the result of one act, at one time, by one person; but the result of insensible accumulations; like the alluvium deposited on the fore shore of a wide river, by the influx of the tides. Will the Association deny these deductions? Will those reforming gentlemen remove, at one fell swoop, a system wherein every individual portion has been successively presented to the societies' acceptance, successively approved by actual experiment, and finally confirmed by the collective wisdom of the people at large? In the judgment of unprejudiced minds the Conference has acted honourably; and none but a spirit of faction and contumacy can arrive at any other conclusion.

XVIII. *The aim of the Association is evidently to blend Republicanism with Wesleyan Methodism.*—This is no conjecture; its truth appears in the following quotation: "That in future, the Conference be open to the laity," and "that each Travelling Preacher in full connexion be allowed to admit, by ticket, one person to each sitting of the Conference."

Let us examine, 1. ITS EXPENSE. About six hundred Travelling Preachers are in full connexion employed in the home-work, which number will require six hundred of "the laity" to meet the conditions of the argument. Can the members of the Association really imagine that the towns wherein the Conferences are held are so enamoured with the reform-scheme as to bear, in addition to their

* At the Hull Quarterly Meeting, Sept. 1833, the writer called upon the Meeting to state whether any objection existed in their minds against any Conference regulation passed the preceding August. No objection whatever was urged. The Superintendent, Rev. John Stephens, asked the writer if *he* had any. "No, Sir."—"Why do you then inquire?" "To keep the Charter alive, certainly." Perhaps not one case in a hundred transpires of the Meetings' using this lawful privilege.

old hospitalities, the additional burdens of six hundred delegates for three or four weeks? Certainly not. Each layman, or delegation-spy, would then incur on an average, in travelling expense, board, &c., &c., an expense of about ten pounds each; forming the modest sum total of six thousand pounds per annum, additional burden upon the Connexion. "All this is ridiculous" say the illuminati. True, most true; nothing more so; but who makes it ridiculous? The Wesleyan reformer, to be sure. Such an expense must be incurred, or the Conference and Connexion will be annoyed by the ceaseless clamour of a knot of demagogues. Are the reforming gentlemen prepared to show the existence of any evils or abuses that can justify so tremendous a change in the executive administration of the body? A mere school-boy must perceive this Association nostrum, purporting to remove the evils of Wesleyan legislation, must induce, if equitably administered, a preposterous burden upon the Connexion; and if but partially adopted, must entail monstrous injustice, and irretrievable disorganization.

2. ITS ABORTIVENESS: The theory is founded on the assumption that the lay-delegates have nerve, wisdom, and conscience, to grapple with ministerial mis-rule; but on this point is not their regulation most ambiguously laid down? "That each Travelling Preacher in full connexion be allowed to admit, by ticket, one person to each sitting of the Conference." Are we then to understand that the Superintendent is to select his own lay-spy, or must the Circuit select its plenipotentiary to watch the Superintendent or the Conference? Take the former supposition. Cannot the reformers perceive that the Superintendent, far from fixing his choice on a sturdy anti-ministerialist, will assuredly select such a lay-spy as he can very soon metamorphose into a stanch confederate against the liberties of the people? What a delectable specimen of legislation opens to our view! How brilliant! dark with excessive light! Well may we exclaim with the Mantuan bard, "*Lumina rara micant.*" Behold the SUPER and his SPY, ever and anon looking unutterable things at each other, as they travel side by side to the Conferential arena!

Take the latter supposition; that the Circuit selects its own plenipotentiary. The aspect of affairs is scarcely meliorated at all by the change. Are not the reforming Methodists aware of the concentrative tendency of power? This is one of the most important views of the whole subject, and is entitled to special regard. It is in the nature of all governments to lessen the number of their efficient agents. The actual executive is managed by a few whose

intellect, station, and character direct measures, command general assent, sway the whole, while the majority of the professed executive sit as ciphers in the great account. No earthly measures can fully neutralize this concentrative tendency. All that can be done is to apply remedial or restorative means ; and by frequent recurrence to first principles prevent evils from acquiring a dominant and overwhelming accumulation.

It is highly probable that the Jubilee in the Jewish theocracy was instituted on the principle of counteracting or neutralizing the concentrative and accumulative tendency of power. A fatal blow was thereby struck at the root of worldly ambition. The oppressor and the avaricious well knew that a boundary line was thrown around them, over which they could not pass with impunity ; and that they must not, by increasing tyranny and cupidity, acquire a fearful empire over the happiness and liberties of others. Apply the concentrative tendency to the case in hand. "The admission of the laity to the Conference" must ultimately converge to a lay oligarchy, blended with a ministerial oligarchy ; and to this junction may be attributed every persecution and tyranny that have yet afflicted the church of Christ. It is a false *ex-parte* calumny to affiliate the misrule, oppression, and persecution of the Christian church to ministerial power alone. And yet the aggregate of the debates and pamphlets of the Association is based on this assumption. Ignorance, malignity, or insanity, has kept the true posture of the controversy out of sight ; and when it is recollected that the scriptural and Wesleyan authority to govern the church of Christ (vide paragraph VII.) is also studiously concealed, it is seen that a more contemptible empiricism has not been practised upon the Connexion since its establishment in 1739.

3. ITS DEFECTIVE APPLICATION. If theories are good only as far as their benefits are visible in practical application, the delegation-scheme of the Central Association is conspicuously imbecile and unfortunate. We are not left to float on the tide of conjecture as to future contingencies or probabilities. The delegation panacea has had nearly forty years' trial in the "New Connexion," or Kilhamite section of Methodists. The following table will illustrate the point, taken from their Minutes of Conference :—

Years.*	No. of Circuits.	Instances of one person sustaining the office of Preacher and Representative.	A letter, sustaining both offices.	Years.	No. of Circuits.	Instances of one person sustaining the office of Preacher and Representative.	A letter, sustaining both offices.
1798	9	1	0	1814	26	6	3
1799	15	1	0	1816	24	6	2
1800	17	2	0	1817	24	6	2
1801	16	5	2	1818	25	3	2
1802	17	8	1	1819	25	6	4
1804	20	9	2	1822	26	7	2
1805	18	3	2	1823	28	3	2
1806	18	6	2	1824	28	4	3
1807	20	5	3	1825	26	6	1
1808	19	5	0	1827	28	7	2
1809	22	7	1	1828	29	9	2
1810	26	9	4	1829	28	1	3
1811	28	5	0	1830	28	5	1
1812	25	8	4	1833	29	5	2
1813	24	6	1				

This scale exhibits one hundred and fifty-four infringements of their peculiar and *sine qua non* law of one Circuit being each time represented by a Preacher and delegate. To this add fifty-three instances of *letters* sustaining both offices, making a total of two hundred and four deviations in twenty-nine years; or about two hundred and seventy from their commencement in 1797 to the present time. It is perfectly just to assume, that the same inflexible obstructions to a practical developement of the lay-representative theory will be found in the Wesleyan Connexion. Allowing, then, the old Connexion to remain stationary for the next thirty-eight years, (that is, the age of the New Connexion,) the lay theory will exhibit about three thousand two hundred and forty deviations from the proposed plan of the Association.

The defectiveness of the application is not only numerically apparent, as above calculated; but the evil or imbecility is augmented by its powerlessness to manage critical cases. The very germ or quintessence, wherein lay interference might be supposed the most necessary, is unaccountably thrown away by the Association: viz.: 1. By the laity having no vote. 2. By the Preachers voting by ballot. 3. By the withdrawment of the laity when the characters

* The Author could not gain access to the Minutes of 1803, 1815, 1820, 1821, 1826, 1831, 1832, 1834; the omissions will not affect the condition of the argument.

of the Preachers are under scrutiny. These three points being thrown away, it would puzzle an LL.D. to know what remains to call forth the *brutum fulmen* of an Association. Six thousand pounds per annum, forsooth, are to be spent in loading a cannon to shoot a fly ! Help, Jupiter, we are all out of our depth. The best, and perhaps the most effectual, punishment for such church-mending empirics would be to make them, *vi et armis*, pay for their own nursling, and sit in the Conference until repeated and copious libations of their own compound should sober them again. The scheme or system of the New Connexion is incomparably more feasible than the vagaries of the Association ; the former is intelligible, though practically inoperative ; the latter defeats all attempts to know what they are driving at.

On the subject of the junction of a lay and ministerial oligarchy, more will be said in the sequel.

XIX. *The Members of the Association are accessory to, and responsible for, the collateral as well as direct Consequences of their unjustifiable Combination.*—These consequences are as varied in their character, as melancholy in their result ; and however circumstantially distinguished from each other, converge to one point ; namely, to blast, in irretrievable ruin, the Christian ministry. It is a most disastrous and fatal matter to give a wrong *impetus* to the public mind. Any man of ordinary reading must perceive, that the popular feeling and purpose are not framed of such controllable elements as that the *impetus* can be recalled at the pleasure of those who have given birth to intense excitement. “The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water ; therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with.” Once open the sluices, and an awful torrent sweeps the vale, and bears away the ancient landmarks, reared by the piety and wisdom of many ages. Some of these effects that must flow, may be enumerated : 1. The reckless confusion of Christian ordinances and institutions. This result may not suddenly ensue, but its ultimate realization is certain. Thus the Israelites in the days of Elijah were alternately harassed by the opposing claims of Elijah and the idolatrous priests, until the people halted between two opinions ; literally, hopped from bough to bough ; but what were the results of this national indecision ? “The altar of the Lord was broken down ;” a melancholy suspension of religious sacrifices. Apply the principle, or illustration. Many simple and sincere hearts are perplexed by the contentions of the societies ; are confounded by the rapid transition of a Warren, of a Stephens, of a

Rowland, &c., &c., from love to hate, from veneration to disgust, from submission to resistance ; who in one fell and déperate act of tergiversation have entered practically into alliances with avowed enemies ; and formed coalitions with men they once deemed of the baser sort. 2. The irreligious libertine quotes the récriminations of religious men, in vindication of his apathy to divine things. It is to be feared that, whether the contending parties satisfactorily terminate their feuds, or repose in malignant silence and everlasting separation, the impress of contempt on the mind of the scorner remains indelibly fixed. Dr. Priestley in his "Corruptions of Christianity" has taken care to avail himself of this in all its force, and has inflicted incalculable injury by a publication, as distinguished by the bland urbanity of its style, as by the insidious sophistry of its principles. 3. The depression of ministerial energy and influence. In contravention of the opinion of every lay theorist, a lay-delegate, and a Minister of Christ, are not equal men ; the employment, character, consecration, and piety of the latter are assumed as the greater ; the influence is the greater ; that it should be so, is the voice of reason and of God. This influence will vary as the Minister more or less developes in his life and character an appropriate consistency and dignity. The character and office of a Minister is sacred ; the man who assumes the character may be frail ; and consequently ministerial excellence may be seen under many limitations and imperfections. The writer has in vain searched for one solitary expression of solicitude uttered by the Association, as to how they can so check or redress the frailties of the man, as not to neutralize his ministerial worth and energy. The whole concern is handled by them with all the rough savageness of a Goth. 4. The moral integrity of the Connexion at large is impugned by the Association. If their allegations be true, where is either the sense or honesty of the people ? As the support and continuance of the Wesleyan Connexion are purely voluntary, it must follow, whenever the honour or honesty of its governors is impeached, the characters of the governed are also implicated. They stand or fall together. 5. The endearments of private friendship are greatly enfeebled, and not unfrequently destroyed. No society in Great Britain, where the agitators have exerted their oratory, has escaped this withering influence. Family discords have been occasioned ; social ties have been torn asunder ; alienation of heart has been generated, to an extent known only to Him who ere long will avenge his people, and cast down the accuser of the brethren. The prior and paramount obligation of every

Christian is with the church of Christ, not with private friendships ; and if, by the current of events, or agitations of designing restless men, he is compelled either to abjure his attachment to that church he has ever deemed an important section of the true church of God, or forego any private friendships, his path is plainly chalked out by God himself. He is bound to cut asunder any friendships that stand in the way of his devotedness to the cause of Christ. To many this is a hard saying ; who can bear it ? Were we to deduct the workings and sympathies of private friendships, through their countless ramifications, the result would show that the immense array quoted by the Association as hostile to the Conference, and which the Association would have us to understand is the spontaneous unsolicited product of independent minds, would dwindle away to a Lilliputian corps of a few disappointed self-important personages.

6. The value of Christian communion is awfully deteriorated. To a very great extent the church of Christ is just what a few individuals choose to make it ; either as to its internal value and vigour, or its external influence.

Mr. Wesley, in his sermon on Schism, speaks with his usual perspicuity and irresistible force. He proves that a causeless separation from a body of living Christians is both evil in itself, and productive of evil consequences. "It is evil in itself. To separate ourselves from a body of living Christians, with whom we were before united, is a grievous breach of the law of love. It is the nature of love to unite us together ; and the greater the love, the stricter the union. And while this continues in its strength, nothing can divide those whom love has united. It is only when our love grows cold, that we can think of separating from our brethren ; and this is certainly the case with any who willingly separate from their Christian brethren. The pretences for separation may be innumerable, but want of love is always the real cause ; otherwise, they would still hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is therefore contrary to all those commands of God, wherein brotherly love is enjoined : And as such a separation is evil in itself, being a breach of brotherly love, so it brings forth evil fruit ; it is naturally productive of the most mischievous consequences. It opens a door to all unkind tempers both in ourselves and others. It leads directly to a whole train of evil surmisings, to severe and uncharitable judging of each other. It gives occasion to offence, to anger and resentment, perhaps in ourselves as well as in our brethren ; which, if not presently stopped, may issue in bitterness, malice, and settled hatred ; creating a present

hell wherever they are found, as a prelude to hell eternal. But the ill consequences of even this species of schism do not terminate in the heart. Evil tempers cannot long remain within, before they are productive of outward fruit. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. As he whose heart is full of love openeth his mouth with wisdom, and in his lips there is the law of kindness ; so he whose heart is full of prejudice, anger, suspicion, or any unkind temper, will surely open his mouth in a manner corresponding with the disposition of his mind. And hence will arise, if not lying and slandering, (which yet will hardly be avoided,) bitter words, tale-bearing, backbiting, and evil speaking of every kind.

“ From evil words, from tale-bearing, backbiting, and evil speaking, how many evil works will naturally flow ! Anger, jealousy, envy, wrong tempers of every kind, do not vent themselves merely in words, but push men continually to all kind of ungodly and unrighteous actions. A plentiful harvest of all the works of darkness may be expected to spring from this source ; whereby, in the end, thousands of souls, and not a few of those who once walked in the light of God’s countenance, may be turned from the way of peace, and finally drowned in everlasting perdition.

“ Well might our blessed Lord say, ‘ Woe unto the world because of offences.’ Yet, ‘ it must needs be, that offences will come : ’ Yea, abundance of them will, of necessity, arise, when a breach of this sort is made in any religious community : While they that leave it endeavour to justify themselves by censuring those they separate from ; and these, on the other hand, retort the charge, and strive to lay the blame on them. But how mightily does all this altercation grieve the Holy Spirit of God ! How does it hinder his mild and gentle operations in the souls both of one and the other. Heresies and schisms (in the scriptural sense of those words) will soon or late be the consequences ; parties will be formed, on one and the other side, whereby the love of many will wax cold. The hunger and thirst after righteousness, after either the favour or full image of God, together with the longing desires, wherewith so many were filled, of promoting the work of God in the souls of their brethren, will grow languid ; and, as offences increase, will gradually die away. And, as the ‘ fruit of the Spirit ’ withers away, ‘ the works of the flesh ’ will again prevail ; to the utter destruction, first of the power, and then of the very form, of religion. These consequences are not imaginary ; are not built on mere conjectures, but on plain matter of fact. This has been

the case again and again within these last thirty or forty years: These have been the fruits which we have seen over and over, to be consequent on such a separation.

“And what a grievous stumbling-block must these things be to those that are without; to those who are strangers to religion; who have neither the form nor power of godliness! How will they triumph over these once eminent Christians! How boldly ask, ‘What are they better than us?’ How will they harden their hearts more and more against the truth, and bless themselves in their wickedness! From which, possibly, the example of the Christians might have reclaimed them, had they continued unblamable in their behaviour. Such is the complicated mischief which persons separating from a Christian church or society do, not only to themselves, but to that whole society, and to the whole world in general.

“But perhaps such persons will say, ‘We did not do this willingly; we were constrained to separate from that society, because we could not continue therein with a clear conscience; we could not continue without sin. I was not allowed to continue therein without breaking a commandment of God.’ If this was the case, you could not be blamed for separating from that society. Suppose, for instance, you were a member of the Church of Rome; and you could not remain therein without committing idolatry; without worshipping of idols, whether images, or saints and angels; then it would be your bounden duty to leave that community; totally to separate from it. Suppose you could not remain in the Church of England without doing something which the word of God forbids, or omitting something which the word of God positively commands; if this were the case, (but, blessed be God, it is not,) you ought to separate from the Church of England. I will make the case my own: I am now, and have been from my youth, a member and a Minister of the Church of England; and I have no desire nor design to separate from it, till my soul separates from my body. Yet if I was not permitted to remain therein, without omitting what God requires me to do, it would then become meet, and right, and my bounden duty to separate from it without delay. To be more particular: I know God has committed to me a dispensation of the Gospel; yea, and my own salvation depends upon preaching it. If, then, I could not remain in the Church without omitting this, without desisting from preaching the Gospel, I should be under a necessity of separating from it, or losing my own soul. In like manner, if I could not continue united to any smaller society,

church, or body of Christians, without committing sin, without lying and hypocrisy, without preaching to others doctrines which I did not myself believe, I should be under an absolute necessity of separating from that society. And in all these cases the sin of separation, with all the evils consequent upon it, would not lie upon me, but upon those who constrained me to make that separation, by requiring of me such terms of communion as I could not in conscience comply with. But, setting aside this case, suppose the church or society to which I am united, does not require me to do any thing which the Scripture forbids, or to omit any thing which the Scripture enjoins, it is then my indispensable duty to continue therein. And if I separate from it without any such necessity, I am justly chargeable (whether I foresaw them or not) with all the evils consequent upon that separation. I have spoken the more explicitly upon this head, because it is so little understood; because so many of those who profess much religion, nay, and really enjoy a measure of it, have not the least conception of this matter, neither imagine such a separation to be any sin at all. They leave a Christian society with as much unconcern as they go out of one room into another. O beware, I will not say of *forming*, but of *countenancing*, or *abetting* any *parties* in a Christian society!"

This copious and valuable extract, taken in connexion with Mr. Wesley's uniform conduct in these matters, ought to settle for ever the fact of the Central Association being wicked and unconstitutional. He most solemnly avers that these meetings "overturn our discipline from the foundation. Either let them act under the direction of the Assistant, that is, Superintendent, or let them meet no more. It is true, they can contribute money for the poor, but we dare not sell our discipline for money." (*Minutes*, 1776.)

To elude the force of this reasoning, the Central Association profess to vindicate their hostility, by charging the Conference with the violation of their compact with the people in 1795 and 1797. The Reformers profess perfect acquiescence with, and profound veneration for, those conciliatory regulations. They deem the concessions quite adequate "to meet every reasonable requirement of the people," that they contain "sufficient conservative principle to maintain the peace, harmony, and good government of the Connexion;" and that "those instances which have occurred, seemingly at variance with this statement, may all be originated, either to the neglect of acting upon those principles, the infringement of them, or the adoption of regulations at variance with them." And then comes the grand

finale : "The late violation of the constitution of Methodism by the Conference, in reference to the establishment of the 'Wesleyan Theological Institution,' we consider to be a sufficient justification of our publicly communicating with our lay brethren throughout the Connexion on this important subject."

The simple question, divested of all its irrelevant matter, lies in a narrow compass, and may be disposed of in a few words.

The Association declare, 1. The PRINCIPLE of the Institution to be *anti-conservative, anti-spiritual, and utterly subversive*. 2. The MODE of its adoption to have been *unconstitutional and precipitate*. These are most awful sweeping charges, touching the sanity or honesty of nearly a thousand Ministers of God ; and, whether uttered in jest or in earnest, amply prove the utterers to have forfeited the confidence of any religious community. The Connexion is also left in total darkness as to the process by which the Association arrive at this opinion, that the Institution is, in principle, anti-conservative, anti-spiritual, and utterly subversive. They hit off one short *ipse dixit*, and pass onward to other topics, which are also disposed of with equally self-confident brevity and unceremoniousness. There is nothing of the gentleman, of the scholar, or of the Christian, in this mode of doing business. We challenge them to the proof of the charge, and to make good their position. Hitherto, nothing has been elaborated by them on this question, so rich in interest, so replete with sentiment, so important in its consequences. Is there not a wise man among them who could condescend to take some pains to show how learning and piety, when blended in the same man, 'shall be hostile to his usefulness ? Being left, as already stated, to guess at their meaning and their reasoning, it is not impossible we may stumble on a wrong hypothesis. Their theory goes on the principle, if principle they have, that as learning enters the head, religion leaves the heart ; that this influx of knowledge, and efflux of goodness, are *per se* the necessary consequence.

This gibberish tells too much or tells nothing at all. If the theory be correct, that knowledge and piety cannot harmonize ; it follows, that other classes of Christians, besides young Ministers, ought to be benefited by the theory of the Association. In what a state do we bring the British population ! Mechanics' Institutes, and other literary Societies, are usually constructed on the principle of excluding religion from their constitutions, leaving every man to select and cultivate his own ; the Association takes the antipodes of this, and tells the world that an Institution for the mental and Theological culture

of young Ministers, is anti-conservative, anti-spiritual, and utterly subversive ! Carry out these two theories to their ultimatum, and we shall complete the scene, by excluding piety and learning altogether from the world. So reasoned Berkeley and Hume between them; the former avowed we had no body, all was IDEA ; the latter denied we had a soul ; so that, coupling these Castor and Pollux luminaries, poor man had neither body nor soul at all. O Munchausen ! O Knickerbocker ! ye are both outdone. Illiterate piety and literate impiety are both wrong. Each of them has done wrong to a melancholy extent. "For the soul to be without knowledge, it is not good,"—either for Ministers or people. Such is the nature of man, he ought to know every thing that ought to be known, or know nothing at all.

To this reasoning the Association may reply, "It is not to knowledge we object, but we deprecate the wrong bias given it at the Institution." This makes the matter wretchedly worse. "A wrong bias ;" aye ? Suppose, for the sake of argument, this fear be correct. Are we to understand this wrong bias, or unhappy direction, to be occasioned by design, or accident ? Argue the case on the former notion, namely, that the Conference, the Tutors, the subscribers, are all leagued to train some handful of young men to principles anti-conservative, anti-spiritual, and utterly subversive ; and this, observe, with malice aforethought. Have the Association forgotten all this time the conjoined influence of the Deed of Declaration, the Chapel Tenure, and Voluntary Supplies, which must of necessity bring back, soon or late, both Preachers and people to original simple principles, on the supposition of any glaring departure ? *Itinerancy* is secured by the Deed of Declaration ; *doctrinal orthodoxy* is guarded by the Chapel Tenure ; and *ministerial fidelity* is guaranteed by Voluntary Supplies. In the face of all these constitutional guards, do the Association really believe the Connexion could if it would, or would if it could, commit such a suicide as is implied in the epithets, "anti-conservative, anti-spiritual, and utterly subversive ?" It is proper the members of the Association went to some Institution or other, before they again handled questions of ecclesiastical polity. But where is S. Warren, LL.D., all this time ? Doctor, you advocated, to a late stage of the preliminary proceedings, the principle of the Institution, and now are Lord Protector of an Association, which denounces your former acts and principles, as "anti-conservative, anti-spiritual, and utterly subversive !"

It offers no relief for the Association to say, "The projectors had

no design to trample on the liberties of the people; or to ride rough-shod over all the original institutions of Methodism, but accident or thoughtlessness generated the blunder." Yet to this dilemma they must come if the two former conclusions be denied.

Ministerial unfaithfulness, decay of piety, or abatement of zeal, are traceable to other causes, rather than to the attainment of knowledge. A man's communion with God is not primarily retarded or promoted by mental culture. His faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the Lord is altogether irrespective of his intellectual endowments. In cases of spiritual declension, the literary man suffers human science to displace heavenly wisdom; while the illiterate man occupies his mind with things sordid and puerile.

Whether the Institution be ultimately an evil, or otherwise, we shall not stop to argue with the Association. When they have followed, through all its ramifications, the portentous evil; and, with sound speech that cannot be gainsayed, tell the world what, when, where, and how these evils shall destroy the Wesleyan fabric, it will be our office to grapple and refute their statements, or yield an honourable surrender. Till then we meet their naked *ipse dixit* with a bare denial. The projectors who framed the Institution, the Conference who adopted it, the Tutors and Committee who manage it, and the people who support it, are conjointly as capable of forming an accurate estimate of its probable results, as the "collective wisdom" of the Association can muster on the question. Admitting, however, that the Association and the Conference mutually agree upon the quality and tendency of the Institution, another matter remains to be disposed of. The Association avers, 2. The *MODE* of its adoption to be *unconstitutional* and *precipitate*. If one truth in the present controversy be clearer than another, it is this,—that the people have no legal right to interfere in the matter at all; it is a question altogether out of their boundary line. Whether the case be argued on scriptural authority, on rational grounds, on Mr. Wesley's acts, or on constitutional usages, the conclusion will be individually and conjointly the same. How far the Conference may or may not consult, as a matter of courtesy, the opinions of the societies, is another thing. The Association, having taken up the question in a legal position, the tenability of that position remains to be tried.

The societies, having sent by their suffrages a young man into the ministry, cease to have control over him, to all intents and purposes. He stands in a new position; he is the servant of the Conference,

to administer duly and truly the ordinances and institutions of the Connexion, as mutually agreed by the Conference and societies ; to cultivate the plot of Wesleyan soil allotted him, to the greatest possible extent, and in the best possible way ; to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. The claim to interfere with the studies of a Minister tells too much in three senses : 1. If it be right to enter and break up the Institution, that languages and philosophy shall no more be studied, the same right would require a pledge from each candidate that he shall not study them at home. The Association cannot elude the force of this induction, while they maintain the principle to be pernicious, anti-conservative, anti-spiritual, utterly subversive. If they let go this point, and simply object to the *modus operandi*, to the fact of their combination, then the same arguments which go to scatter the Institution tell heavily upon their own combination, and offer a resistless motive to the disbanding of the Central Association. 2. The right of the societies to control the studies of its Ministers, whether deemed scriptural or civil, must be reciprocal or partial. If reciprocal, the Conference must interfere, to a monstrous extent, with the literary and domestic arrangements of the societies. 3. Popular dictation on literary subjects, if valid, brings with it the right of popular dictation on *doctrinal* subjects ; and this right must have existed anterior to Methodism or Protestantism. Suppose, then, a popular faction demands other doctrines than those secured by the chapel tenure, how must the Conference act under these circumstances ? The whole Anti-Wesleyan movement of the Association is obviously grounded on the principle or phrase of, *Vox populi, vox Dei* ; an adage as false as it is dangerous. “ A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land ; the Prophets prophesy falsely, and the Priests bear rule by their means ; and my people LOVE TO HAVE IT so : And what will ye do in the end thereof ? ” (Jer. v. 30, 31.) It is too late and too farcical for the Association to profess submission to the doctrinal laws of Mr. Wesley, while their own combination is maintained in utter defiance of the writings and acts of that venerable Apostle of Methodism. They have placed themselves in a posture totally incapable of giving any pledge or guarantee whatever. They are not charged with any design or wish to alter the fundamental doctrines of the Connexion ; nothing of the kind. The argument goes to prove, that if the popular dictation be so paramount and omnipotent, what will the Association do to recal or neutralize the impulse which their own principles have generated, in

case that impulse take a heterodox direction? If "the people love to have it so," the Association must yield, or receive the same castigation they are now aiming to inflict upon the Conference.

Let it be assumed, however, that the societies have a constitutional right to determine whether or not a young Minister shall learn Latin, Greek, Hebrew, &c.; and let us inquire into the truth of the charge, that the Conference, by its unconstitutional and precipitate adoption of the scheme, has broken faith with the people. The Association tell us that the compact of 1797 may be injured or violated in three ways: 1. By the neglect of acting upon these principles. 2. By the infringement of them. 3. By the adoption of regulations at variance with them.

Try the conduct of the Conference on the first count in the indictment; namely, neglect of principle. In a compact between two parties, neglect may be incurred by both parties, as well as by one party. The neglect of the Conference to fulfil its part of the compact must lie in the non-publication, or withholding from the people, the *new* laws it enacts from year to year; that the societies *cannot* know what regulations have been enacted. The neglect of the people consists in the non-inquiry after those enactments. This is the converging point of the whole concern; the pivot on which the present controversy hinges. The members of the Association are hereby individually challenged to prove one case, wherein a rule passed since 1797 has been adopted or enforced by the Conference, without previous publication of its intention. It is too much to say, that the Conference ought to invite popular debate on their own enactments. Was it ever known that a shopkeeper must call at the houses of his customers to obtain assurances of having sold just weights and measures? The case is in perfect parallelism. Must the Conference hawk their Minutes from door to door, and ask the societies if their own acts are honest or honourable? Conference acts are not done in a corner; thousands of copies of Minutes are annually published; and their arrival into the Circuits is usually announced from the pulpits every September. The onus or obligation rests with the people to inquire, read, and examine; and then adopt or reject the measure. If the people will not be made wise, but blunder onward in culpable apathy or wilful ignorance of what is transacted in the Connexion, is there honesty or decency in the conduct of the Association charging the Conference with having broken faith with the people? Most assuredly not. The writer would stake his existence, if the case were argued in a court of judi-

cature, the complainants would be non-suited, and an order of *nolle prosequi* would be issued by the Judge. If this count in the indictment is thus shown to be "not proven," the other two counts fall to the ground.

As to the "precipitancy" of adopting the Institution, the charge is grossly false; the Magazines and Minutes of the last ten years have more or less prepared the minds of the societies for its introduction. The appointment of a provisional Committee to frame the outline of the plan, was known to the Connexion; and yet the reforming gentlemen slept unconcerned while measures were in progress anti-conservative, anti-spiritual, utterly subversive; and would have so remained unconcerned, had not their apathy been awakened by the hurling of a firebrand from the hand of one who ought to have known or done better things.

XX. *The democratic Principles on which the Association is obviously based exert a most baneful educational Influence on the juvenile Portion of the Wesleyan Connexion.*—Every Christian parent must be tremblingly alive to these inevitable results. Would to God such results were only few and far between! Numerous are the instances within the writer's knowledge of raw, beardless juveniles plunging into the vortex of public excitement, pouring forth their puerile, self-confident twaddle on those questions of church government which great, wise, and good men have deemed it prudent to approach with much modesty and moderation. That there is a substratum of republicanism pervading the whole operations of the Association, is too apparent to be concealed by their filmy, transparent mantle of pretended veneration for the memory of Mr. Wesley, or for the constitution of Methodism. It is a most easy thing to persuade men, especially young men, that they are badly governed. It is in the nature of the carnal mind to resist law and discipline; to assert uncontrollable independence; to shake off the yoke which it is good to bear in youth. On this point the Association cannot stand guiltless before God. Take two specimens in proof. At the public Meeting of the Association, held in Hull, February 11th, 1834, Mr. Rowland thus speaks: "Every one in this assembly, I have no doubt, is quite disposed to go to heaven, and receive the crown. Now, some are glad of the easiest possible way of arriving there. If you are of this class, I will just give you a few directions; that is, if you are among those disposed to go to heaven in the smoothest, easiest,

most happy, and comfortable way possible, do as you are bid ; be silent when you are bid ; never open your lips to complain against Conference ; never utter a word of complaint against the conduct of your Preachers ; never reflect upon the usages and doings of your Governors ; always give your money at once and freely, and never ask what is become of it. Aye, I am sorry to say it, I regret it, but I avow it from close and many years' actual observation ; these are the qualities that will recommend you to your Ministers ; these are the things that will procure you their smiles. Beyond this, if you are very fond of office, you will have it ; you will be courted ; you will receive the pastoral care of your Preachers ; they will have love and affection for you, and these good deeds ; and, after your smooth and oily path is terminated, they will snugly slip you into paradise itself."

The second specimen is twin-brother to the former : Dr. Warren announces : "I shall say this, and let my words be taken down as I speak them, if you please, only let them be repeated as I speak them. I say that the combination of eight hundred and thirty-two Preachers, as is reported, to support Methodism as it is, is neither better nor worse than a conspiracy against the rights and liberties of the people ; and that combination and conspiracy must be put down ; aye, and by the people." The writer was alone when he first read these speeches ; he wept on his knees, and prayed, "Deliver us not over to the will of our enemies, for false witnesses have risen up against us, and such as breathe out cruelty."

But the Association deny any hostility ; they "express their ardent attachment to Wesleyan Methodism, and pledge themselves to continued unity with its societies, and promise to promote, as far as in them lies, the same principle of unity throughout the Connexion." If these specimens prove their friendship, what must be their enmity ? Well may the Spaniard say, "Save me from my friends ; I will defend myself from my enemies." Let us examine these specimens conjointly, for the refutation of one is, in fact, the refutation of both. This "combination or conspiracy against the rights and liberties of the people" has been progressively accumulated, or instantaneously formed. Suppose the former ; at what period, and in what way, did the combination spring ? The most awful surge that ever engulfed the frail bark, began with slight rippling of the surface ; this rippling would augment to gentle undulations, and so onward gather strength, till the breakers bid defiance to any earthly

power. How came the Doctor to permit himself to be on the Provisional Committee of an Institution, so anti-conservative, so anti-spiritual, so utterly subversive, so ruinous to "the rights and liberties of the people?" He stands before the world as the worst of all accessaries; an accessory *before* the fact. Courts of judicature give little or no quarter to such an accessory; the case is widely different with accessaries *after* the fact, many mitigating circumstances often occur in the latter cases. The Doctor has transfixed himself on one of the horns of the dilemma, from which no logic, or sympathy, can extricate him without surrendering his sagacity or his integrity. Besides, how came the Association to discern these portentous evils of the Institution, while the Connexion were, in general, blind to them? Are the tents of the reforming Methodists pitched in the land of enlightened Goshen, while Egyptian darkness shrouds the remaining land of Methodism? How far the sentiments of the Doctor and of Mr. Rowland are substantiated, let the preceding pages testify; it is the democratic educational influence of such doctrines that is our present inquiry. Young men were instructed, at the Tabernacle-Meeting, to speak evil of the rulers of God's people. If it be contended that the Conference is not composed of Ministers, called by God and man to administer in holy things, say so; and let the point be fairly debated. If the validity of their ministerial function be allowed, then Mr. Rowland and Dr. Warren cannot stand guiltless before God. But, say they, "The Conference has acted contrary to law." Let this allegation be supposed correct; the guilt of these two gentlemen still remains. "Then said Paul unto him, [Ananias,] God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: For, sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, 'Revilest thou God's High Priest?' Then said Paul, 'I wist not, brethren, that he was the High Priest: For it is written, 'Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.'" (Acts xxiii. 3—5.) The case of Ananias could allow of no mistaken or varied opinion; his treatment of St. Paul outraged law and decorum; yet the Apostle acknowledged himself to have behaved unguardedly. The alleged infraction of Methodist law, by the Conference, stands, at most, on very dubious grounds. The vast majority of the societies think diametrically different from the Association; and maintain that no law, divine or Wesleyan, has been broken either by the principle or mode of establishing the Theological Institution. And yet the Conference, for this well-

intentioned act, are held up to public execration, and deemed a mere shade better than a Pandemonium.

Be it also remembered, that the revolutionary doctrines propounded by the two gentlemen, and which drew forth reiterated plaudits, were offered to the acceptance of scores of young men between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five. Can Dr. Warren or Mr. Rowland offer a satisfactory guarantee, that no injury or ruin shall overtake any one of those amiable and deluded young men, through the announcement of such factious and democratic views? The supposed personal grievances of Messrs. W. and R., yea, the supposed innovation of the Wesleyan Institution itself, are mere chaff when contrasted with the prolific and deleterious consequences of saturating the minds of young men with disesteem towards Christian Ministers, and contempt for wholesome laws. Hundreds of cases transpire when attempts at self-vindication and self-redress are worse than useless; when evils, infinitely more weighty, flow from appeals to popular clamour, than can be incurred by silent endurance.

Innumerable are the cases when acts and principles, laws and administrations, men and measures, wheat and tares, must both grow together till harvest. Had the Conference attempted to inculcate unsound doctrines, or to coerce support and subsistence, or to diminish the knowledge or graces of the societies, some reason for agitation might appear: But no such cause exists; and guilt, to a fearful extent, rests on the heads of those who first whirl, as it were, public sympathies into a vortex, and draw within its influence simple and unwary minds.

XXI. Concluding Remarks.—A Christian church is usually defined as the voluntary association of good men, holding the same general religious views, with an eye to mutual spiritual benefit. This definition is partly true, and partly false. Mutual good is certainly the aim and consequence of the union; but that union is not voluntary in the sense of being optional. The existence and agency of the church of Christ form an essential component of the divine economy to save the world. The Sacred Oracles know nothing of creaturely option: Every human creature who hears the word of salvation is morally bound not only to join and defend the church of God, but to continue therein on scriptural and honourable principles.

The Association have proved, in the doctrines they have propagated, their total unfitness to guide the vessel to its desired haven.

They can gravely tell the world, that nearly a thousand Ministers of Christ, though dependent on voluntary supplies, trample on the consciences and understandings of their brethren ; they can cut off the supplies from the widows and orphan children of deceased Ministers ; they can dash the cup of sympathetic aid from the lips of the hoary-headed Preacher, worn out in the service of the sanctuary ; they can set members at variance with each other ; and, last not least, they can train the young to speak evil of the rulers of God's people. Ought such an Association to exist, and to be composed of men who hold communion with the Wesleyan body ? Most assuredly not. This truth is as clear as unclouded solar light, that the Association will obliterate Methodism, or Methodism must annihilate the Association. The question is not, whether we shall have any *new* or any *old* Methodism, but whether we shall have any Methodism at all ! To all intents and purposes it is to us, *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*. The Association has been generated by suspicion, reared by slander, and, in too many instances, will expire in apostasy.

On the whole structure of Wesleyan Methodism, the Almighty has stamped a most signal peculiarity. Its origin, progress, and work, are peculiar. It stands equally remote from high Churchism, and low Dissent ; it cannot hold any connexional alliance with ultra Toryism, or ultra Liberalism ; statesmen and philosophers are alike puzzled with it ; it never had an incorporated political character ; and it never can have ; until, by lay-delegation, a lay oligarchy and ministerial oligarchy shall have changed its original intrinsic character. It stands isolated before the world ; the principle of exclusion which shuts out lay power from the Conference re-acts upon themselves ; and prevents their collusion with, or access to, the people. In Methodism we have a vast and mighty incorporation, unsustained and uncorrupted by political power. It can grapple with a difficulty that would overwhelm and crush any local or independent church, however respectable or influential. No local, factious majority can ride rough-shod over a healthy, yet oppressed minority. The Conference, as a body, are dependent on public opinion, yet are independent of any individual or factious dictation. A broad and deep stream of libertinism is now pervading the land ; and the Almighty appears to have raised Wesleyan Methodism as a break-water in the confluence of the opposing interests and excitements of the land. The Connexion fears no democratic rage, and courts no aristocratic smile ; the friend of all, the enemy of none. It can

enforce obedience, without coercing its subsistence ; its opinions and acts will, every year, increase in their consequence and influence. God has evidently designed Wesleyan Methodism to grapple with and surmount the evils of popular democracy. The foaming steed may bite the bridle, but the rider shall tame his mettlesome fury. In this painful, yet salutary work will the Connexion, at stated periods or intervals, be called to labour ; but the final reward shall be quietness and assurance for ever.

THE END.